apparent thickness of 1.0 mm or greater, and a compressive recovery of 30% or more, wherein the apparent thickness is between three to twenty times of a thickness of the base sheet, and said plurality of convex portions have peaks separated by 3.5 mm to 15 mm, respectively.

REMARKS

Favorable consideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3 and 6-14 are presently pending in this application, Claims 9 and 10 having been withdrawn from further consideration by the Examiner, Claim 1 having been amended by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-3, 6-8 and 11-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over McGuire et al. (U.S. Patent 6,254,965 B1) in view of Akahori et al. (U.S. Patent 5,310,587) and Japanese Patent No. 404154573A (hereinafter "JP '573").

Claim 1 has been amended herein. This claim amendment finds support in the original specification, claims and drawings. For example, amended Claim 1 is supported by page 8, line 6, to page 9, line 12, of the specification. Hence, no new matter is believed to be added thereby.

Before addressing the outstanding art rejection, a brief summary of Claim 1 as amended is believed to be helpful. Claim 1 according to the present invention is directed to a kitchen sheet including a base sheet made of a fiber aggregate comprising a laminate including a hydrophobic melt-blown nonwoven fabric and a hydrophobic spun-bonded

nonwoven fabric provided on at least one side of the hydrophobic melt-blown nonwoven fabric and to be brought into contact with food and having an air permeability of 5 $cc/cm^2/sec$ or more as measured in accordance with JIS L1096A, the base sheet having a plurality of convex portions giving the kitchen sheet an apparent thickness of 1.0 mm or greater, and a compressive recovery of 30% or more, wherein the apparent thickness is between three to twenty times of a thickness of the base sheet, and the plurality of convex portions have peaks separated by 3.5 mm to 15 mm, respectively. By providing such a laminate in a base sheet, the kitchen sheet significantly improves its abilities to shape and retain the convex portions and control dishwashing effects and cleaning performance with light scouring effect.[1]

McGuire et al. disclose three dimensional nesting-resistant sheet materials. Nevertheless, McGuire et al. are not believed to teach "a base sheet made of a fiber aggregate comprising a laminate including a hydrophobic melt-blown nonwoven fabric and a hydrophobic spun-bonded nonwoven fabric provided on at least one side of the hydrophobic melt-blown nonwoven fabric and to be brought into contact with food ..." as recited in amended Claim 1. On the other hand, McGuire et al. disclose a hydrophobic nonwoven web having a plurality of three-dimensional protrusions, and although the McGuire et al. web may be made of a laminate, McGuire et al. are not believed to disclose or suggest that such a laminate be a combination of a melt-blown nonwoven fabric and a spun-bonded nonwoven fabric. Further, McGuire et al. are not believed to disclose or suggest a spun-bonded nonwoven fabric positioned to be brought into contact with food. In addition, it is believed that based on the disclosure of McGuire et al., the three dimensional sheet of McGuire et al. would not possess the range of compressive recovery recited in Claim 1. Therefore, the

[1] Specification, page 8, lines 10-13.

subject matter recited in amended Claim 1 is believed to be distinguishable from McGuire et al.

Akahori et al. disclose a wrapping for food. However, Akahori et al. do not teach "a base sheet made of a fiber aggregate comprising a laminate including a hydrophobic melt-blown nonwoven fabric and a hydrophobic spun-bonded nonwoven fabric provided on at least one side of the hydrophobic melt-blown nonwoven fabric and to be brought into contact with food ..." as recited in amended Claim 1. On the contrary, Akahori et al. disclose a laminate composite sheet made of a fluid impermeable sheet, an absorbent fiber sheet and a hydrophobic fiber nonwoven fabric. The Akahori et al. hydrophobic fiber nonwoven fabric includes a melt-blown nonwoven fabric provided for making contact with food, i.e., not a hydrophobic spun-bonded nonwoven fabric as recited in amended Claim 1. Thus, the subject matter recited in amended Claim 1 is believed to be clearly distinguishable from Akahori et al.

JP '573 discloses a packaged body for food, and does not teach "a base sheet made of a fiber aggregate comprising a laminate including a hydrophobic melt-blown nonwoven fabric and a hydrophobic spun-bonded nonwoven fabric provided on at least one side of the hydrophobic melt-blown nonwoven fabric and to be brought into contact with food ..." as recited in amended Claim 1. Instead, the food packaging material of JP '573 is made of a hydrophobic sheet such as a melt-blown nonwoven fabric and a flash spun sheet. The JP '573 sheet is used in a single ply and JP '573 does not disclose or suggest the use of a laminate. Also, the hydrophobic sheet in JP '573 is a perforated, e.g., pierced, slit, or incised, hydrophobic sheet, and is not believed to have an uneven three dimensional surface. The subject matter recited in amended Claim 1 is therefore clearly distinguishable from JP '573.

Because none of McGuire et al., JP '573 and Akahori et al. discloses the base sheet as recited in Claim 1, even the combined teachings of these cited references are not believed to render the structure recited in Claim 1 obvious.

For the foregoing reasons, amended Claim 1 is believed to be allowable. Furthermore, since Claims 2, 3, 6-8 and 11-14 ultimately depend from Claim 1, substantially the same arguments set forth above also apply to these dependent claims. Hence, Claims 2, 3, 6-8 and 11-14 are believed to be allowable as well.

In view of the amendments and discussions presented above, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance, and an early action favorable to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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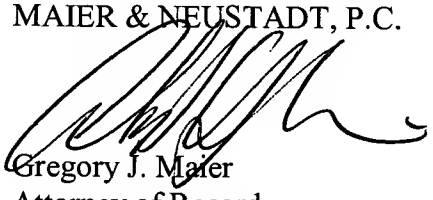

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IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claim 1 as follows:

--1. (Three Times Amended) A kitchen sheet comprising a base sheet made of a fiber aggregate comprising a laminate including a hydrophobic melt-blown nonwoven fabric and a hydrophobic spun-bonded nonwoven fabric provided on at least one side of the hydrophobic melt-blown nonwoven fabric and to be brought into contact with food, said fiber aggregate having an air permeability of 5 cc/cm^2/sec or more as measured in accordance with JIS L1096A, said base sheet having a plurality of convex portions giving said kitchen sheet an apparent thickness of 1.0 mm or greater, and a compressive recovery of 30% or more, wherein the apparent thickness is between three to twenty times of a thickness of the base sheet, and said plurality of convex portions have peaks separated by 3.5 mm to 15 mm, respectively.--